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MN014401. Senate Leader Praises Navy Medicine for Crisis Response
By Jan Davis, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

Bethesda, Md. - Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, representing the U.S. Senate, visited National Naval Medical Center Bethesda this week to personally thank the men and women of Navy Medicine for their response during the crisis.

"I have feelings of heart-felt gratitude for all of the people involved in this effort," said Daschle.

On behalf of the U.S. Senate, Daschle presented RADM Kathleen Martin, NC, commander of National Naval Medical Center Bethesda, with an American flag that had flown over the Senate Office Building in recognition and appreciation of the support her staff and Navy Medicine have contributed.

Daschle received one of the first anthrax-laden letters at his office on Capitol Hill. It triggered the request for Navy Medicine's assistance with the anthrax situation in numerous government buildings. Dozens of Bethesda healthcare professionals responded to the incident, processing more than 7,000 lab samples and providing more than 2,700 bottles of antibiotics to individuals exposed to anthrax.

Unsung heroes in responding to the anthrax attacks are CAPT Al Mateczun, MC, and his team from the Biological Defense Research Directorate at the Naval Medical Research Center in Silver Spring, Md. Mateczun and his colleagues invented the rapid hand-held assays that are being used nationwide to screen for anthrax. At the request of federal and local authorities, the team screened and cultured hundreds of suspect substances, and were the first to identify anthrax contamination at the Supreme Court, CIA mail room, within the State Department diplomatic mail pouch system, and in one of the House of Representative office buildings.

"My team and I have been working a minimum 12 (hours a day) - 7 (days a week) since all this started," said Mateczun.

Physicians and technicians from Mateczun's directorate also deployed to New York City to lead a multi-service group that assisted the beleaguered city in screening for anthrax. Other physicians from NMRC also supported the response efforts at the Capitol and the White House when possible

anthrax contamination was reported at those sites.

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MN014402. NEHC Surveillance Allays TB Outbreaks

By CAPT Bruce K. Bohnker, MC, Navy Environmental Health Center Norfolk, Va.

Norfolk, Va. - In the early days of wooden ships, when sailors first went to sea, cramped living quarters were an ideal environment for infectious diseases to spread through the crew almost unchecked. While improved hygiene, vaccines, preventive treatments, and sound nutrition have greatly reduced disease outbreaks aboard ships and in other cramped living quarters, Navy Medicine also uses surveillance to watch for early signs of outbreaks, even before Sailors and Marines actually become sick.

The Navy Environmental and Preventive Medicine Units (NEPMU), located worldwide, and the Navy Environmental Health Center (NEHC) in Norfolk are the Navy's front line defense of surveillance for emerging diseases among Sailors and Marines. One of the diseases they carefully monitor is tuberculosis, an ancient serious respiratory disease that has been on the upswing in the last several years.

In 2000, more than 333,700 tuberculosis skin tests were performed on Sailors and Marines, resulting in 4,647 individuals with positive tests, about 1.4 percent of all tested. This positive test meant that they had been exposed and infected by the tuberculosis bacterium, but had not become ill with active TB. The purpose of having these personnel then take the preventive medication is to eradicate the infection and prevent illness and any risk of the individual becoming infectious in the future.

According to HM1 Isaiah Corbin of the epidemiology department at NEHC, who did the statistical analysis, aircraft carriers had the lowest rate, with only 0.6 percent having a positive skin test; the Marines had 1.2 percent positive, and large deck amphibious ships 2.2 percent. There were only 25 active cases of tuberculosis disease identified in the last year, well below the 47 active cases identified in 1998, but above the average of 13.8 active cases per year since 1988.

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MN014403. DoD Works to Educate Healthcare Workers on Vaccines

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Kathleen T. Rhem, American Forces Press Service

Washington, D.C. - Military allergy and immunization specialists have worked hard to educate healthcare providers on vaccine safety. But in light of rising bioterrorism concerns, they've ratcheted up their efforts.

Army Col. Renata Engler, MC, is the medical director of the Vaccine Healthcare Center Network, which recently opened its first center at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. She explained that vaccines are tools to protect Department of Defense (DoD) members, but they also need to be afforded the same care, respect and safety precautions given other prescription medicines.

DoD and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta became partners this summer to provide a network of clearinghouses for information on vaccine safety and procedures throughout DoD.

The new initiative was in response to "the growing challenges that have arisen in the context of immunization healthcare," Engler said, particularly concerning the public controversies surrounding immunization safety in general as well as the DoD Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program specifically.

"Knowledgeable resources had to be developed to support the providers and the small outlying immunization clinics that are dealing with the challenges and to support special, complex patient issues that local medical facilities might not be resourced to handle," Engler said.

Engler said her work has come into a whole new light in the aftermath of Sept. 11 - the contamination of the mail with anthrax has made the threat of bioterrorism clear to Americans.

She said her organization has been involved in developing plans for possible new or changing vaccination programs for service members.

Any possible use of smallpox vaccine is of particular concern, since America's stockpiles of vaccine for this deadly, disfiguring disease are old and was made with outdated technology, experts have said. Engler and her staff are consulting with various agencies to work up contingency plans in case experts decide there's a need to vaccinate DoD and emergency response personnel against smallpox, she said.

"There are some concerns about adverse events related to that vaccine," Engler said. "We've gotten busier faster than we wanted to in response to new bioterrorism threats that are arising." But this is why the organization was created in the first place.

"The Vaccine Healthcare Center is really a resource to address the need for outreach education in this rapidly changing world of immunization challenges," Engler said. "We need to do everything we can to give the right shot to the right person at the right time in the right way."

She said service members 20 years ago received "a handful" of vaccines, but now routinely take more than 50 shots during their careers. And another 30 vaccines are at various stages of the developmental pipeline and may be introduced into the immunization requirements over the next five years.

Adverse reactions and drug reactions occur in 1 to 2 percent of people with any drug, Engler said. That small percentage, she noted, can mean big problems in a large enough population.

"That's 20,000 to 40,000 people in a population of 2 million," she said. "Improving our understanding of rare adverse events would enhance vaccine safety surveillance and lead to higher quality immunization healthcare delivery overall."

The Vaccine Healthcare Center Initiative is scheduled to expand to include several regional centers in the future. Several more are set to open in regional DoD medical centers in the United States in 2002, leading up to a total of 15 regional centers by 2006, Engler said.

"These vaccine healthcare centers would work as a network to share information, not just internally, but with the Food and Drug Administration, CDC, and the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System, as questions arise surrounding a vaccine," she said.

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MN014404. DAVID Sees to It that Aviators Measure Up

By Doris Ryan, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

Pensacola, Fla. - Since naval aviation began, eager young pilots-to-be had to measure up before they were allowed to training for their wings of gold.

Being physically fit and coordinated, with mental acuity and psychological toughness isn't enough. They also have to, well, measure up.

One of the primary selection criteria for aviators is anthropometric screening, where candidate's size, weight and proportions are measured and analyzed to ensure they fit in the aircraft properly to operate it effectively and perform emergency ejection procedures.

Since the 1960s measurements were done by a hospital corpsman with a slide, scale and measuring tape in a pain-staking procedure. The measurements required such precision the corpsmen were required to have special training. Yet occasionally, a mistake resulted in a candidate who didn't "fit," resulting in lost time and training dollars, and disappointed candidates.

But now, a new technology called DAVID is making slip ups almost impossible.

DAVID is Digital Anthropometric Video-imaging Device, a special camera and computer that can take a picture of a candidate and compute within two minutes which naval aircraft a candidate is sized right to fly.

Jack L. Saxton, a research physiologist at the Naval Aerospace Medical Research Laboratory in Pensacola, Fla., heads up the DAVID program.

"Compared with manual techniques, DAVID's advantages include the permanent electronic storage of images and measurements, electronic transfer of the data into other software packages, and file retrieval for quality control review," said Saxton. "Naval Air Systems Command, Chief of Naval Education and Training and other commands are very enthusiastic about DAVID."

Saxton said DAVID is already operational at the Naval Academy and the Naval Aviation Medical Institute. The Marines at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va. will also be getting DAVID soon.

For more information on DAVID and other research efforts at the NAMRL visit the web site at <http://www.namrl.navy.mil>.

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MN014405. 2001's Smoke Out Means No Chew, Too!

By Mark Long, Ph.D., Naval Environmental Health Center Norfolk, Va.

Tobacco users, mark your calendar! Nov. 15 is the annual Great American Smoke Out Day.

Smoking is an addiction that can be beat as proven by millions of Americans who have quit tobacco use. But the Great American Smoke Out Day isn't just for those who light up cigarettes - it's for those using smokeless tobacco, too.

Myths continue to abound that using spit or smokeless tobacco or smoking cigars are safe alternatives to cigarettes. But these "safe alternatives" are also dangerous, and, in fact, are especially targeted by both the Navy and Marine Corps because of their high usage among Sailors and Marines.

Great American Smoke Out 2001 events are being planned at facilities worldwide. At Naval Medical Clinic Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, participants may turn in tobacco products, including cigars, cigarettes, chew, dip, pipe tobacco, and clove cigarettes, and tobacco advertisements for an opportunity to win prizes from drawings. At Naval Ambulatory Care Center Portsmouth, N.H., quitting posters are plastered all around the area, and, according to clinic wellness coordinator Ellen Payeur, "impotent cigarettes" will be distributed at smoking areas.

"You can rationalize smoking and dipping till you are six feet under," said Payeur, who herself is an ex-smoker, and encourages tobacco users to keep on trying until they quit.

"You can quit smokeless tobacco!" said Dave Reid, the health promotion officer at Naval Training Center Great Lakes, Ill. "The hardest part about quitting is that snuff and chew seemingly goes hand in hand with an aggressive, fast-forward, high-performance, outdoor lifestyle.

"What you have to do is come to the realization that spit tobacco is not part of your personality or lifestyle. It is nothing but a life-wasting addiction," he said. Reid beat the addition ten years ago.

There are thousands of success stories from Sailors, Marines, Reservists and family members who have quit tobacco on the Great American Smoke Out! Give it a try. Encourage others to quit. There's still time to volunteer with your local Smoke Out efforts.

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MN014406. Virtual Naval Hospital Adds New Medical Information

Washington, D.C. - New medical information has been added to the Virtual Naval Hospital, an amalgam of medical information targeting military health care providers world-wide. The Website is located at <http://www.vnh.org>.

New additions include revisions to key Fleet medical instructions, Manual for Medicine chapter updates, Bureau of Medicine notices, military field guides and handbooks, Army and Navy occupational and environmental health manuals, and new articles added to the Navy Health Book.

A complete list of additions is available at the VNH website at <http://www.vnh.org/Misc/WhatsNew.html>.

Since its inception in 1996, the award winning website has improved access to information on medical planning, disease clinical diagnosis, decision support, treatment, and follow-up as well as for patient education.

The offline VNH 2000 CD version of the website was mastered in May 2000. More than 10,000 copies of this popular CD-ROM have been distributed worldwide.

The next version of the VNH2002 CD-ROM are in its final stages of production and will be released later this year.

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MN014407. Gainous Named Senior Pharmacy Tech of Year

Sigonella, Sicily - HM1 Gary Gainous, pharmacy leading petty officer at U.S. Naval Hospital Sigonella, has been selected as this year's senior pharmacy technician of the year by the The Association of Military Surgeons of the United States.

Gainous was presented a plaque and a check for \$500 at the annual Combined Forces Pharmacy Conference held in Orlando, Fla. earlier this month.

He won out over nominees from the Navy and other uniformed services.

Gainous was cited for his mentoring work and technical expertise and managerial skills. The honor was a "big surprise" because of the extraordinary competition he was up against, he said.

Gainous was nominated by LT Louis V. Guarino, MSC, head pharmacist at USNH Sigonella.

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MN014408. TRICARE Dental Program Provides Smile Insurance

As with medical prevention, dental prevention should begin at an early age. Having a regularly scheduled dental examination is essential for maintaining overall good health. The TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) serves active duty family members, members of the Selected Reserve and the Individual Ready Reserve, and their family members.

The TDP provides a comprehensive benefit package at low monthly premiums. It covers preventive care at 100 percent to encourage family members and Reservists to seek dental care early to avoid more costly or serious dental diseases in the future. Approximately 1.5 million beneficiaries are enrolled but only about 54 percent have actually used the TDP benefit and scheduled an appointment for a routine dental check-up.

Recent studies show that periodontal "gum disease" is the most common cause of tooth loss for adults and children. In early stages, it's called gingivitis and is both preventable and reversible. "Approximately 75 percent of American children and adults have some form of gum disease or gingivitis and don't even know it because it is usually painless in its early stages," said Navy Capt. Lawrence McKinley, senior dental consultant, TRICARE Management Activity.

"And while daily brushing and flossing are important, it's not enough.

Periodontal disease starts below the gum-line where toothbrushes and floss cannot reach. By having regularly scheduled dental exams routinely every six months, your dentist or dental hygienist can check for signs and symptoms of diseases, and remove plaque which can build up over time and harm teeth and gums," McKinley said.

If left untreated, gingivitis can lead to diseases which affect gum tissue, bone and other supporting tissues of the teeth. Early detection and intervention by a dentist or dental hygienist can reduce the risk of developing gum disease and prevent permanent damage to teeth and gums. For infants, the biggest oral health problem is baby-bottle tooth decay. This problem occurs mostly in infants who routinely fall asleep with bottles in their mouths filled with sugary liquids such as milk, formula, juice, or anything other than plain water. Wiping baby's gums after feeding with a clean gauze pad or infant wash cloth, can help remove food particles and reduce plaque build up on erupting infant teeth.

The TRICARE Dental Program provides "smile insurance" to enrollees because it offers 100 percent coverage for diagnostic and preventive services, such as examinations, cleanings, x-rays, fluoride treatments and emergency services. The program also provides some coverage for fillings, braces, athletic mouthpieces, root canals, crowns and bridges.

Overall good dental health starts at an early age by establishing good oral hygiene routines and by visiting your dentist regularly. Enrolling in and using the TRICARE Dental Program provides the insurance for a lifetime of healthy smiles. For general information on the program, active duty family members, Reservists and their family members may contact United Concordia (UCCI), the dental program administrator at 1-888-622-2256, or visit the UCCI Web site at www.ucci.com. Family members and Reservists may also contact their local health benefits adviser, beneficiary counseling and assistance coordinator or dental treatment facility for information on how to enroll.

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MN014409. HealthWatch: Get Your Health Facts Every Friday
By Aveline V. Allen, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

Norfolk, Va. - The facts about what will keep you healthy - that's what Naval Environmental Health Center's Friday Fact newsletter provides to active duty and Reserve Sailors, Marines, families, and civilians.

The one-page health newsletters are written and colorfully formatted by the health promotion offices at NEHC in Norfolk, Va. Each Friday they are posted on the NEHC website for health specialists and others to distribute or post.

Some of the health subjects the fact sheets cover include:

- nutrition
- HIV aids education
- fitness
- clinical preventative services
- tobacco cessation
- suicide prevention

It also includes information on health promotion conferences and other educational opportunities for health promotion professionals.

The newsletter was started in 1996. Patrice Wiggan of NEHC's health promotion department, coordinates Friday Facts.

"Articles in the newsletter come from program managers at NEHC with information they need to provide to the field offices," said Wiggan. She said that although she relies on her program managers for articles, field offices occasionally contribute to the newsletter.

Friday Facts are also e-mailed to the health promotion offices at

military treatment facilities. It's also e-mailed to individuals who ask to be put on their subscriber list. Wiggan said her list consists of almost 500 people. Because of software restrictions, the e-mailed newsletter doesn't have the graphics and colors that the version available on the NEHC website.

"There have been occasions when school nurses were interested in receiving the newsletter when we published stories, for example, on how children deal with trauma," Wiggan said.

The newsletter is available on the NEHC website at: www-nehc.med.navy.mil/hp/ff/hpfifax.htm or have them e-mailed to you by sending your request to: FridayFacts-request@nehc.med.navy.mil.

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MN014410. Navy Surgeon General To Open New York Stock Exchange
New York City - VADM Michael L. Cowan, MC, Surgeon General of the Navy and Chief, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, will open the New York Stock Exchange Monday, Nov. 12, the federal holiday to recognize Veteran's Day.

He will be joined at the podium by other senior members of the Armed Forces.

Cowan will be in New York as a participant in America's 911 Ride, a commemorative motorcycle ride in remembrance of those who served, protected, lost their lives, and to those who volunteered during and after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

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Navy and Marine Corps Medical News will not be published Thanksgiving week, Nov. 23, 2001.

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